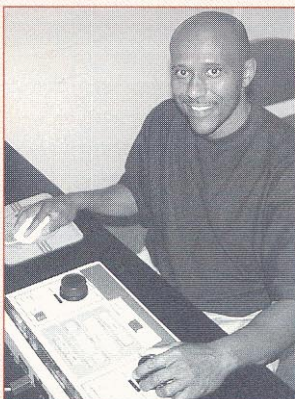
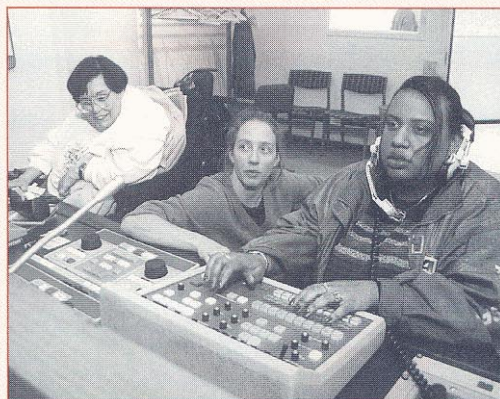


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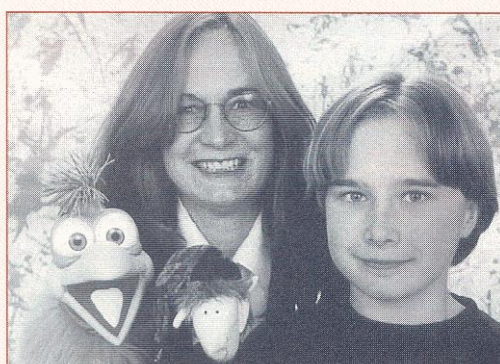
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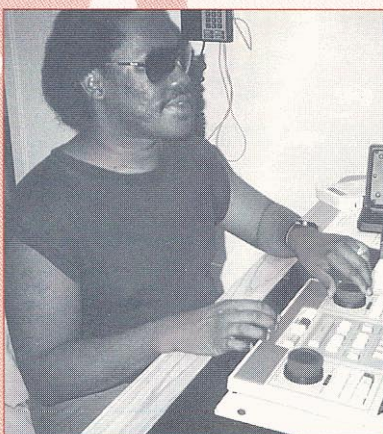
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*"...remember, you too can  
Inspire America..."*



*"...it has changed their lives..."*



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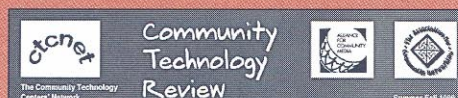
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# The Ultimate Keepers of Democracy

by **Bunnie Riedel**

Executive Director,  
Alliance for Community Media

As my children grew, I made it a practice to "hear them out." Even when I disagreed with their opinions, I wanted to teach them they had a right to their viewpoint. Frequently I asked them to explain their opinions and I might say "Well, have you considered...?" Or I would point out other ways to view an issue. I felt it important that my children learn the necessary skill of critical thinking. Life presents many challenges which require the capacity to test the credibility of ideas against experience, tradition, knowledge and perception. Without this, we are vulnerable to manipulation by other individuals, institutions or movements.

Will Rogers said, "All I know is what I read in the papers." Sometimes that's all any of us know. I am often pleasantly surprised when someone offers a viewpoint I have never thought of. I like the exercise of re-thinking my assumptions, of being challenged to reconsider what I thought I knew or of finding out there was another (or maybe two or three other) stories behind the story. Sometimes my opinions don't change even when presented with more information, and sometimes they do. I take pride in being open-minded.

But if ideas are monolithic, if informational sources are limited and there are few alternative sources to offer competing ideas, then how can one have informed opinions? How can anyone be blamed when they follow the herd or march in lock-step?

Wall Street is abuzz about the recent CBS/Viacom merger. Speculation is flying about the profit making potential of such a media behemoth. Fred Moran, an analyst at the investment firm ING Baring said, "You can literally pick an advertiser's needs and market that advertiser across all the demographic profiles, from Nickelodean with the youngest consumers to CBS with some of the oldest consumers, and with the Country Music Network, the Nashville Network, MTV and VH1 right in the middle." The CBS/Viacom merger is a marketing director's dream, but when I heard about it, I didn't think of the money machine, I thought

*This "public interest" thing that you do, whether you are paid staff or a volunteer in community media, does make the difference between seeing through the glass darkly or seeing in the full light of day.*



about the collapse of diverse sources of information (those pesky ideas I think are important).

Since the FCC relaxed the broadcast ownership rules, the courtship between entertainment corporations and the networks has taken on an unchaste character. "After a deal like this, the urge to merge becomes feverish...And right now temperatures are soaring all over the city," says Howard Stringer, chairman of Sony. "It's like musical chairs...You keep taking away one more chair. There's a scarcity issue now. Disney has ABC. Warner Brothers starts their own network...CBS now merges with Viacom. So NBC is sitting there. Whom do they go after?" says Jeff Logsdon, entertainment analyst at Seidler Cos.

Most of us will never play in the Wall Street big leagues, so the mergers, marketing and profit are something we could care less about. But most of us do watch the news and get information from our television sets and that's something we should care about. "If CBS is now put in the position where there are increased pressures to provide higher profits, then CBS news is lost," says Marvin Kalb, former CBS newsman, now executive director of Harvard University's Shorenstein media center. Howard Kurtz of the Washington Post wrote on September 8, 1999, "...critics were quick to question whether Viacom cares about news."

What do these mergers, acquisitions, buyouts and relaxed FCC broadcast ownership rules mean to people who provide community media? It means that you are more important. It means that the work you do everyday, even when it seems mundane, may provide the last outpost

for the freedom of ideas and the flow of real information. It may mean (excuse the self-importance) that you will ultimately be the keepers of the democracy.

It definitely means that the fight for the preservation and expansion of PEG into every community in this country is crucial. It also means that the germination of community media beyond our national borders is critical. Everyday you give the world the tested and realized notion that citizens should be able to watch what their elected officials are doing, and they should receive real content based information regarding the quality of life in their communities. Everyday you give the world the tested and realized notion that education can be delivered in a multitude of ways, and every person deserves the right to receive it. Everyday you give the world the tested and realized notion that individual freedom of speech belongs on electronic medium and that the community is served when non-profit groups can have access to that medium for little or no cost.

The "public interest" work you do, whether you are paid staff or volunteer, makes the difference between seeing through the glass darkly or seeing in the full light of day. It creates a societal tapestry rich with ideas and sewn with the threads of diverse opinion. It is the distinction between raising up a nation of people who will follow the herd or learn to think critically for themselves and their communities.

The media giants will merge, but we must be vigilant to providing a media free from corporate purse strings and dedicated to community service. If not for ourselves, then maybe, just maybe, for our children.



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## Vital Voices for a Healthy Democracy

by Rob Brading

This August I had the wonderful good fortune to spend a week at Ghost Ranch in the high desert of New Mexico. Ghost Ranch is set in the heart of Georgia O'Keefe country, about 50 miles northwest of Santa Fe and about 12 miles up the road from O'Keefe's home in Abiquiú. As you might imagine, the setting that inspired so much of O'Keefe's work is rugged and spectacular, especially with the lush green veldt that sprang from this year's monsoon.

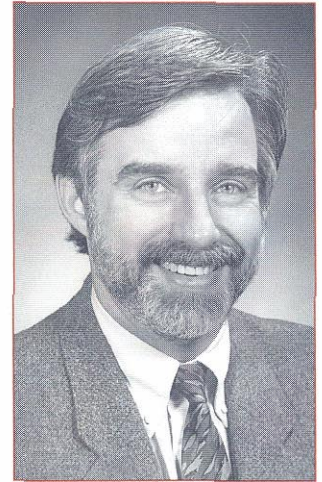
As lucky as I was to be in such a sublime setting, I was even more fortunate in my companions. Although I was there for R&R, I also had the opportunity to be a hanger-on at sessions on conflict resolution with former UN Ambassador Andy Young, former CBS reporter John Dancy, Marvin Chandler who, apart from being a fine musician, was also the only person prisoners would talk to during the Attica uprising.

Although I learned something about conflict resolution, actually quite a lot, and hope that I grew from the experience, I also had that not so unusual experience of finding meaning and motivation for what we do in community media in unexpected places.

One person told the story of a producer from one of the cable networks who came to one of the Mohawk reservations in New York to work on a program in a series on American Indians. He asked to be taken to a particular sacred spot and was accompanied not just by his guide but by the five-year old daughter of the family he was visiting. The site they visited holds a steep-sided retaining pool at the foot of a waterfall. The daughter, despite several admonitions from the guide to stay away from the pool, fell in. Although it wasn't particularly chilly for a November day, the water was cold and the girl's clothing quickly absorbed the water, losing all its insulating value. The guide pulled the girl from the pool and the party made a pell mell descent down the trail to get the girl home and into warm clothes.

When they arrived, the little girl's father asked her what happened. She

*...these voices are vital to a healthy democracy, just as vital as those of any politician, executive, corporation or political donor. These voices may make us uncomfortable, we may think that they're too peculiar to be taken seriously, but that's part of what makes for a vital, healthy democracy.*



responded that a black bear had come out of the woods and pushed her into the pool and that when she had tried to climb out, the bear had pushed her down again into the pool. Hearing this, the producer couldn't contain himself and told the father that wasn't had happened at all, that the little girl had it all wrong. He said that the guide had warned her several times, but she had ignored the warnings and that, obviously there had been no bear, that she had slipped and fallen in. The father interrupted the producer and asked the girl to finish and then sent the girl for a warm bath and dry, warm clothes.

For a variety of reasons, we're not inclined to believe the girl. Me? I believe her. Not that I don't believe the producer. But I'm not gripped by determining who's right and who's wrong. I am fascinated that a story, even one as simple as this, has a multitude of different facets, perspectives, and truths.

In our culture and our media, while we're likely to hear the producer's tale, it's not very often that we hear the little girl's story. Even if we'd believe her, we're not likely to hear it because she won't get to tell her story. Certainly her story won't appear in any mainstream media because it's not readily believable.

Each of us who works in community media has heard the stories and almost certainly worked with someone

whose story is like that. The story may not fit comfortably with the mainstream perception of reality, it may be too peculiar, too odd, too far outside the norm. We're unlikely to hear any story that lies outside the mainstream.

But these voices are vital to a healthy democracy, just as vital as those of any politician, executive, corporation or political donor. These voices may make us uncomfortable, we may think that they're too peculiar to be taken seriously, but that's part of what makes for a vital, healthy democracy. To paraphrase a '60s' anti-war slogan, what if we had an argument and nobody came? It's all too easy to be swept away by the mainstream, by conventional wisdom. Of course, experience often shows us that conventional wisdom may have been conventional, but was hardly wise. Community media has an essential place in strengthening and nurturing democratic participation by preserving a platform for those voices.

*Rob Brading is chairman of the Alliance for Community Media and executive director of Multnomah Community Television in Gresham, Oregon, email [rbrading@mctu.org](mailto:rbrading@mctu.org), telephone 503.667.7636.*



## Alliance Honors Three at National Conference

Three outstanding community leaders were honored with awards at the international conference of the Alliance for Community Media in Cincinnati, Ohio on July 9, 1999. Each of the award categories recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions in the areas of humanistic communications, public, governmental and educational access programming, local community origination and organizational leadership.

The recipients and categories are as follows: Sheriff BJ Barnes of Guilford County, North Carolina, was honored with the *The George Stoney Award for Humanistic Communications*; Deborah Vinsel, executive director of Thurston Community Television in Olympia, Washington, received *The Buske Leadership Award*; and Richard D. Turner received *The Jewell Ryan-White Award for Cultural Diversity*.

The George Stoney Award is given annually to an organization or individual who has made an outstanding contribution to championing the growth and experience of humanistic community communications. Sheriff BJ Barnes garnered international attention in 1998 for his regular public access show *Sheriff's Beat* when he broadcast the euthanasia of an unwanted dog at the Guilford County Animal Shelter. The bold public access show was met with enthusiastic support by animal protection groups for showing "the unvarnished truth about what happens to unwanted pets." And as a result of its airing, animal adoptions increased at the county shelter by 300 percent.

In addition to the show on animal euthanasia, Sheriff Barnes has produced shows on issues such as domestic violence, citizen safety, sexually transmitted diseases, volun-



**Alliance for Community Media Executive Director Bunnie Riedel (left) with (l to r) Jewell Ryan-White Award for Cultural Diversity recipient Richard Turner, Buske Leadership Award recipient Deb Vinsel, and George Stoney Award for Humanistic Communications recipient Sheriff BJ Barnes.**

teerism for children's causes, county government and the health department. Sheriff Barnes also hosts a bimonthly radio talk show which on occasion interviews inmates in order to discourage young people from criminal behavior.

The Buske Leadership Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated commitment to the mission and goals of the Alliance for Community Media, leadership within the organization within the three last years, a high degree of involvement in the organization nationally, regionally and at the chapter level, and continuing service to the Alliance.

Deborah Vinsel, the 1999

recipient of The Buske Leadership Award, has been an active member of the Alliance since 1983. Vinsel's notable achievements include service on the national board of directors and the boards of the Central States and Western regions, and chairing the Hometown Video Festival Committee since 1995. She also coordinates the Best of the Northwest festival for the Northwest region, and serves as bookkeeper for the Northwest region. As Executive Director of Thurston Community Television, Vinsel runs a combined public, educational and governmental (PEG) access operation.

"Ms. Vinsel's contributions

to community media and the growth of the Alliance are endless," said Bunnie Riedel, Executive Director of the Alliance. "She is always willing to volunteer her time and she brings a wealth of experience and wisdom to the organization."

Recognizing the importance of diversity, the Jewell Ryan-White Award for Cultural Diversity is given annually to those persons who show an outstanding contribution to a process that encourages, facilitates or creates culturally diverse and/or non-mainstream community involvement in the field of community media.

The 1999 recipient, Richard D. Turner, earned the award for his years of work to increase diversity both in the Alliance for Community Media and in his local work with community media centers. Formerly vice president of the Alliance's national board of directors, Turner chaired the equal opportunity committee which was formed to address the needs of minorities in community television, whether they were volunteers or professionals.

"Richard is one of those people the Alliance turns to for answers and insight on how we can better serve minority populations, either within our own membership or the community at large," said Riedel. "He has been a faithful advocate of disenfranchised voices for years."



### New York University Honors George Stoney

As CMR went to press, New York University was preparing to honor Professor George Stoney. Documentary filmmaker, community activist, and video pioneer, he is a founding member of the Alliance for Community Media and considered the father of the public access movement in the United States. The Alliance's annual award for humanistic communications bears his name.

Often described as a consummate media activist, he has had a lifelong passion for racial justice, social responsibility, community, and freedom of speech. His films have won numerous awards.

The tribute, *George Stoney and the NYU Documentary Experience*, was planned for October 22 and 23 at New York University in New York City.



# Communications as a Tool of Democratic Community

*Alliance for Community Media keynote address, July 10, 1999, Cincinnati, Ohio*

by Pat Aufderheide

Professor, School of Communication,  
American University in Washington, DC

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today to some of the people I take as my personal heroes, people who are carving out real opportunities for real people every single day, even when none of the hardware will cooperate.

You, my heroes, have decided, for whatever demented reason of your own, to assume the challenge of helping to inhabit the frontier region of television: noncommercial space. You have looked at one of the most powerful engines of capitalist accumulation in history and said, Oh thanks, I'd rather do the local cricket match. And I'll take the zoning commission. Oh, yeah, and the guy with the hygiene problem.

Just thought I would let you know that I'm not totally romanticizing the task here.

But really: it's an important and guaranteed-to-be-unappreciated thing to create noncommercial television. Most of us think we know what "television" is: way-too-predictable commercial TV. But more people than ever before are subscribing to cable. And they are about to find out that they don't really know what "television" is anymore, because the paradigm that we've all been waiting to change for so long finally is changing.

You are a big part of our hope that, as we stand on the so-called cyberfrontier, and everybody's doing land grabs, there will be electronic, imaginative public domains out there. That people are given the chance to use the new possibilities, not just be used by them.

If there are open spaces, public domains, public conversations, it won't be thanks to any of the major players. As you know, the period of greatest uncertainty is coming to an end. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 for better and for worse created enough of a regulatory structure for us to see dimly into the near future.

That future will be—here's a big surprise—controlled by a few major corpo-



Pat Aufderheide

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rate actors. It will be a communications universe that is much more about networking, at least in its infrastructure, than about mass media. But it will look and feel much more like mass media than it needs to. The biggest actors will be doing their best to take advantage of the power of networking—especially to harvest as much data as they can from all of us—at the same time as they do their best to minimize the advantage to us of the same power. Why? Because they're not stupid. They love the benefits of old

media—the gatekeeping, the collection points, the old way of aggregating audiences for advertisers, of limiting consumer choice, of creating enough monopoly power to allow them to relax into their profits.

Still, even if the big players succeed in narrowing our options, they are facing the challenge of playing the game a little differently. With interactive TV, with Internet-based communication, with linked technologies, people have more opportunities to select, or deselect, to discover or to exclude, to confront or to escape, even to develop alternative communications networks, than they ever have had. So now, the game is cultivating and grooming and shaping and creating something that the old guys call audience, and that you call community.

I have a brilliant friend, Neil Seiling, who produces avant-garde TV, and who was talking to me about the problems of programming now. He said that in the emerging media universe, the one basic rule will be simple: "Whoever gets the audience, wins."

This is much harder for them than before, when the big actors in media just divided the captive audience, and when the providers of plain-vanilla, POTS type phone service rented everybody the same black box. Getting an audience: that'll be the challenge. They're still not quite sure how they're going to do that, but they know that it takes a lot more than recycling programming and blasting it out into the void. They're going to try on at least two fronts: keeping you on their farm, no matter what they will eventually grow there; and making you the milk cows. About the farm part: They talk earnestly about "branding"—establishing a presence that people trust and turn to, a Disney presence, a Microsoft presence, an NBC presence, and so on. They're serious about using every new communications resource to shore up the existing mental real estate they've got, and they want and need to colonize more.

They are also very serious about building databases. And that's the milk



cow part. I hear that the Disney folks are storing away the information they get when kids register on their site, banking it for future use. And I was amused to read in last week's *Advertising Age* that marketers are designing cute little icons that people with state of the art computers and Internet access can click on to get trivia games and mini-shows. Virgin Atlantic has an *Austin Powers* icon that you toggle on to play a trivia game—if you first give them some information on your travel habits. “At the end of the day, it's all about data collection,” the marketing manager for Virgin Atlantic said.

I think that you guys have a solid institutional base of experience that gives us much better models than an *Austin Powers* travel toggle-show or a Disney marketing database for what you can do with sophisticated, interactive communications. Look at Davis, California, where the access cable people and the community computing people joined forces to shape interactive electoral coverage, so that Davis citizens asked the questions they needed answers to and got substantial news coverage too. Look at CAN-TV in Chicago, which has nurtured and sheltered a growing public space for labor issues. Look at Covington, Kentucky, where the Media Working Group helped teach artists from throughout the region how to use new technologies. Just as interesting, MWG is creating a virtual gallery opening that creates another open, public electronic space, and is fearlessly tinkering with it to see what works and what doesn't.

Elections, labor issues, grassroots arts—that's not just what commercial TV doesn't do well, but the kind of television that only exists as a feature of living community. Throughout the Alliance community, you've figured out what many terrified people in commercial TV are just beginning to grasp: it's about facilitating human relationships, not about the technology. The difference between you and the folks in commercial TV, of course, is about what kinds of human relationships you want to facilitate.

I know that on an average day, when the equipment is down or downright defunct, it may seem that, in fact, it is about the technology. But take a moment to imagine our near future. You may not always be get-me-the-duct-tape tech wizards. Even today we need to know

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much, much less about how our complex equipment works than we did a decade ago, and there's never been so much space to fill.

The coming challenge will be creatively shaping uses, building links, helping to cultivate imaginations that have been stunted by years of learning, from all of commercial TV, never to dream of alternatives. At the same time, I don't mean that people aren't being offered captivating, well-produced entertainment by our commercial culture. To the contrary, it's the most astonishing concentration of human creativity ever in the history of the world. To do what you can do well, you don't have to learn to reject the awesome, amazing, incredibly fecund popular culture that has given us great movies like *The Empire of the Sun* and great TV like *The Sopranos* and musicians like Ry Cooder and—well, I'm using my list, and you have your own.

But shouldn't people be able to imagine, and want something more or different? Communications is after all the vehicle by which we understand what's important in the world and for ourselves. God help us if it's all about the little Budweiser frogs, cute as they are and good as they are for the Anheuser-Busch family and stockholders.

What you're good at, and what we need more of, is encouraging people to be able to imagine communications not just as a fount of entertainment, good or bad, but as a tool for community in its most democratic aspect. And I mean community not as a smug haven from heartless consumerism, a cozy little pre-color Pleasantville, a chunk of consensus behind a picket fence. I mean community as the shared space where differences are negotiated and common problems are solved. I mean community in the sense that our great philosopher John Dewey used the word “public,” the part

of our lives that we share by force of circumstances and that we inhabit best when it's maintained, in part with the tools of communication. I mean the unglamorous but absolutely necessary business of a civilized democracy.

In many ways, the Internet has been a tremendous gift to us in that endeavor, not just because of what the technology permits, but because of the way it grew up, with so many useful civic and community services were among the pioneering applications. It was a rare example of communications that had a highly visible early life as a noncommercial, open-to-everybody kind of thing.

The interactive era is also a terrific boon to those of us who care about creating civic culture because, let's face it, television as a mass medium is not the most natural, the most user-friendly medium for grassroots communication and community building. It has great advantages, but terrible disadvantages too. It is a technologically intense, resource hog of a medium. There are big technical hurdles to overcome, and they just get worse with obsolescence. And there are huge cultural hurdles to overcome, most particularly the stunted-imagination problem. Put another way, this is the fact that those new trainees all “know” what television is when they walk in the door.

As the TV set starts to look and act less like a traditional, top-down TV set and more like a computer screen or a video conference call, it's going to be that much easier to free up imaginations to use the technologies that are becoming easier to use for noncommercial, civic and community purposes.

And you are the people who've got the experience in how to do that. You have the names and numbers of the non-profit community groups. You know how to drive the cable company and the city



council crazy until they do what they should. You have the beginnings of the social imagination to inhabit electronic public domains.

You also know how many people around you don't have a clue about what they would like to do with their new opportunities. That's an old problem for anyone who's worked on democratic communications issues, we're not confused about why we have it, and it's not going to be any cheaper than it ever was to address it, just because we have new technological opportunities. Because however expensive telecom technologies are, the most expensive thing is the cultivation of human creativity and connection. That's not just about training, although that's a part of it. It's about investing in people and community over the course of a life cycle.

One of the things that makes me maddest in the whole access story is how easy it has been for conservatives to argue that culture doesn't need subsidy. It's the way they've gotten many decent taxpayers to dismiss a core part of a civilized society—as if they expected anything else in their social lives to run well if there were no investment in it. They don't expect the sewers to be maintained out of sheer love of common plumbing, or the highway signs to be crafted by a volunteer committee of sign lovers. Community TV, community networking, grassroots arts, community communication takes not just skill and work and love, but sustained resources, so that institutional memories can be built up, political relationships can be groomed, leaders can find each other, people can learn from their mistakes.

And that all takes money.

We've lived through a terrible transition. Access started in an era of generous but careless social welfare liberalism. As that era declined, access weathered a brutal period of vulgar and also sophisticated assaults on anything that would impede the "greed is good" philosophy. We are now, post-Telecom Act, all living in a more sober era, in which very big and powerful companies are taking on challenging new business arrangements and offering untested services, such as widespread broadband access. Those companies have been permitted to get very big so that they can take very big risks. As they do so, they need to be

*We need to challenge our legislators and regulators at every level.... We need to show them that we have approaches, we have answers, we have resources that are all the more worth investing in because they address needs that will never ever be answered efficiently, effectively, or appropriately in the marketplace.*

made to invest in the future of the society that will need their services. And sometimes they have.

Look at what happened in California, when Pacific Telesis and SBC merged. Thanks to more than a hundred community groups working together, the California Public Utilities Commission required that the new merged company invest in shrinking the digital divide. In Ohio, the Public Utilities Commission also succeeded in extracting funds from merged companies Ameritech and SBC for community initiatives.

Those are great examples, because they show what can happen when community-based organizations work on and with government agencies to harness the energy of the new era in telecom. They are also chastening examples, because the dollar figures are only in the millions, and there are several decimal points more of investing to do in community networking.

The feds have also earmarked teensy tiny packets of money—\$10 million from the Department of Education, \$17 million from the Department of Commerce's TIIAP. And of course, there are many, many small, do-good demonstration projects by large communications companies looking both for good publicity and some smart new ideas on how to design the new networked universe. The Open Studio arts project for instance, was funded by Microsoft and AT&T among others.

These are promising precedents, and it's still so little for such a vast, rich country. It's far too little. We are in terrible

trouble in this country if we think that small demonstration projects can make up for systematic deprivation.

So let me recap my main points here:

▲ The networked environment offers more potential than ever before to actually do what we say access can do: make communications a tool of democratic community.

▲ The megacorporations that were the winners after the Telecom Act are ferociously working to shape that environment in their favor.

▲ You have unique tools and experience, at this moment, to help shape civic and public domains.

But there is no free lunch. We need to challenge our legislators and regulators at every level to see subsidies for culture and noncommercial communication as a critical investment in a civilized, democratic future. We need to show them that we have approaches, we have answers, we have resources that are all the more worth investing in because they address needs that will never ever be answered efficiently, effectively, or appropriately in the marketplace. And when I say we, I don't mean just the good people of the Alliance for Community Media. People in all kinds of organizations in every community need to make these arguments for the funds to cultivate a truly civil society.

You need to stop being my unsung heroes. It's too damn hard. Let's go for being pioneers of the newest public domains, with the citizenry as social investors in this adventure.

Thank you.

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*Pat Aufderheide, a professor in the School of Communication at American University in Washington, DC, is a long-time analyst of and advocate for access media, since her years as cultural editor of In These Times newspaper. As an advocate for the United Church of Christ Office of Communications, she helped to craft the universal service policy Linkup America. As an academic, she has conducted studies on the importance of public interest communications policies. She is the author of Communications Policy and the Public Interest: The Telecommunications Act of 1996 (New York: Guilford Press, 1999, [www.guilford.com]) [See review page 10] and of The Daily Planet: A Media Critic on the Capitalist Culture Beat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).*



## Communications Policy and the Public Interest: The Telecommunications Act of 1996

*I*t was a perfect summer morning, sipping coffee under the trees in Harvard Square, reading Pat Aufderheide's new book, *Communications Policy and the Public Interest: The Telecommunications Act of 1996*. As I turn the page in the section on obscenity and violence, a bird drops a small greeting directly on this paragraph.

"The subtitles can be seen as symptoms of social backlash against the very precepts of deregulation, open competition, and aggressive innovation that the rest of the law promotes (sometimes more in name than in deed). These subtitles may be evidence, albeit indirect, of profound social anxiety as predictable context evaporates in communications and mass media. The subtitles certainly do not testify to coherent policy approaches, or even successful ones."

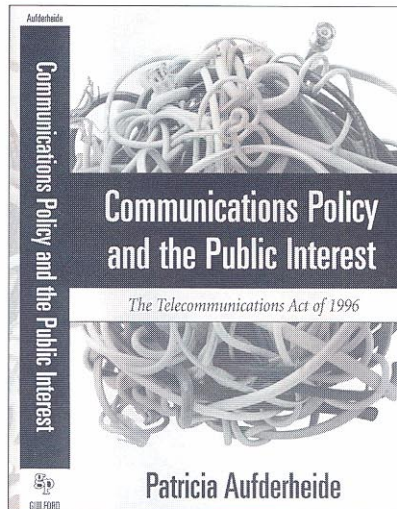
The bird's bulls-eye on the words "coherent policy approaches" is really a metaphor about the net results of the 1996 Congressional action. Aufderheide does chronicle how the shit did hit the fan during our most recent telecom legislative adventure.

It's hard to believe, but, not all that long ago, we had only one phone company, three television stations (and an educational station in some places), cable television really was an antenna service, AM was *the* radio band, (FM was where all those weirdo, alternative types broadcast experimental stuff), Disney had only one "...land," most cities had two daily papers, and television news broadcasts and newspapers had credibility. At the same time, gambling was not only illegal in most states but considered immoral. But time and technology marched on, merging with greed along the way, and presto, in 1996 we had a revised federal telecommunications law. Today, we've got big corporate mergers because of the redefinition of the "public interest," due to a shifting political landscape and the influence of money.

Aufderheide explores in a completely readable manner the background and history of the times and influences that led up to the 1996 Telecommunications Act. She states that the book is intended for two audiences—scholars and students, and active citizens and activists. The book certainly will appeal to and inform the former, but, more importantly, the book should ignite the activist gene in the average citizen whether they are involved in community media or not.

So, where are we today? Aufderheide quickly takes the reader through 20 years of change in the definition of "the public interest."

As Aufderheide describes, "The notion of serving the public interest was associated from the start with stable, broadly available commercial communications services, and government was responsible for monitoring socially significant audiences, arenas, and services that the market serves poorly....The term public interest is grounded in a notion of government responsibility to create conditions for a healthy business that can serve a broad



range of consumers."

But, in the Reagan '80s, with Mark Fowler chairing the Federal Communications Commission, the public interest became synonymous with the public's desires. It is epitomized in this often heard policy refrain, "Communications policy should be directed toward maximizing the services the public desires....The public's interest, then, defines the public interest."

The evil twin of the shift in political philosophies—the influence of money in politics—is also portrayed in a lively narrative describing how the legal telecom sausage was made and by whom.

The most alarming thing you realize is how really ineffectual the public interest commu-

nity was in shaping this important law. Aufderheide does pay some homage to the expanded definition and role of universal service in the future of telecommunications in our schools and libraries, but compared to what all of the other telecom players got out of this law, the public interest lost.

One has to wonder when, if ever, the public interest community is going to wake up and realize which tools actually work in the legislative arena—money and votes. Does anyone have to say again that money talks in politics? So why doesn't the public interest community speak that language?

Here are a few telling quotes from the book which sum up the entire situation.

"The fundamental shift was away from regulated monopoly and toward competition, preferably across traditionally separated business arenas. There was a broad consensus that competition was generally preferable to regulated monopoly. But there was no solid evidence that effective competition was actually possible in either mass media or in telecommunications."

"It also encoded an emerging understanding of the role of regulation and its relationship to infrastructural industries. That understanding boldly equated the public interest with a competitive economic environment, in which consumer and producer desires and needs can be matched efficiently in the marketplace, not structured by regulators."

"The law, reflecting its history of conflicts and compromises, emerged as far less a radical redrawing of the regulatory platform than many had anticipated. It did not aggressively design an 'information superhighway' of technical convergence. Rather it addressed the challenge of crossing technical delivery platforms at the edges."

— Carl Kucharski

*Communications Policy and the Public Interest The Telecommunications Act of 1996*, Patricia Aufderheide, 323 pages, paperback, ISBN 1-57230-425-1, Cat #0425, \$22.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling to Guilford Publications, Inc. Dept. 5R, 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012, telephone 800.365.7006, email: [info@guilford.com](mailto:info@guilford.com), [www.guilford.com](http://www.guilford.com)



Welcome to the fall issue of *Community Media Review*. People active in community media are profiled in this issue, and their stories illuminate the reasons why such talented, committed, and passionate people choose to involve themselves in access. Whether community media is viewed as a movement, a philosophy, a career, or a light in the darkness, the essence of community media is people. In these pages, you will meet people from different geographic areas with differing access to technology and with various backgrounds bound together by a common theme—the desire to tell stories. For many of the participants, the storytelling itself, however it has been accomplished, has become a process of transformation, both for the individuals and for the groups with which they are involved.

## We the People

### SHARING OUR STORIES

One common aspect of the various stories related in these pages is how, through fulfillment of a creative vision, people have used media to positively impact their communities. As demonstrated through these stories, access can allow an individual to use his or her voice and vision to empower a group, and for a group to empower its individual members. In these stories can be seen both the power of the individual and the power of organizations, and ultimately the power of the alliance that brings these people, their stories, and organizations together.

**Also included in this issue:** The text of Patricia Aufderheide's keynote address at this year's national conference in Cincinnati. We think you'll find it both thought provoking and inspiring. For those interested in learning more about Pat's work, we have also included a review by Carl Kucharski of Pat's new book. And we'll introduce you to Richard Turner, Deb Vinsel, and B.J. Barnes—three leaders in our movement who received the Alliance's highest honors at this year's conference. Plus, columns from Alliance Chair Rob Brading and Alliance Executive Director Bunnie Riedel.

The Alliance is a remarkable organization with remarkable people as its most valuable resource. We hope you'll enjoy reading about them as much as we've enjoyed bringing their stories to you.

—Deborah Vinsel & Jennifer Krebs / Co-Editors



# We Be People

## SHARING OUR STORIES

### Editors-in-Chief this issue

**Deborah Vinsel** has been involved in community media for over 16 years. She is currently executive director of Thurston Community Television in Olympia WA. Vinsel has twice served on the national board of the Alliance and is the current chair of the Hometown Video Festival Task Force. She can be reached at 360.956.3100, or [dvinsel@tctv.net](mailto:dvinsel@tctv.net).

**Jennifer Krebs** manages the access channel, city website, and I-Net for the City of Enumclaw, Washington. She has a masters degree in anthropology and has studied cross-cultural uses of television. She can be reached at 360.802.0237, or [jkrebs@ci.enumclaw.wa.us](mailto:jkrebs@ci.enumclaw.wa.us).

## PEACH O'NEILL

*"...Women don't get a lot of press, at least positive press, and there are a lot of 'little' things they're doing that are interesting and important..."*

Peach O'Neill saw something missing in mainstream media—realistic and substantial coverage of what women are thinking and doing. Her answer was the public access series *Venus Rising*, featuring video programming by and about women. Peach has recently produced the second of a two-part episode about "Women Build Houses," a regional program that trains women, children and men in low-cost and natural building techniques.



According to Peach, *Venus Rising* has two objectives. "We want to find out what women are doing in Tucson," she said. "Women don't get a lot of press, at least positive press, and there are a lot of 'little' things they're doing that are interesting and important."

**Tucson, AZ**

Another goal of *Venus Rising* is to help women develop video production skills. The series has an all-woman crew, which Peach says offers them a better environment in which to learn. "An all female crew allows women to focus more," she says. "They are more relaxed with each other in terms of asking questions and making mistakes."

The majority of the current crew members on *Venus Rising* are inexperienced. Peach sees the production as a way for the women to develop stronger technical skills. Then they can move up through the ranks and eventually begin producing episodes of *Venus Rising*, or create their own programs.

Peach began working in access when she lived on the Hawaiian island of Maui. She moved to Tucson in 1998. One of the first things she did after she unpacked was go to Access Tucson. Peach says, "It was natural to find out about and use public access here." Her program airs on two channels in Tucson.

## PAUL MOELLER

*"...With a borrowed RCA camera, a portable recorder, and NO funding, he started..."*

Paul Moeller retired to a remote community in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Nobody knew about or was interested in public access to cable television. Paul wanted to change this. With a borrowed RCA camera, a portable recorder, and NO funding, he started.

**Calaveras County, CA**

The cable company was not supportive. The county board of supervisors reached an agreement with the cable operator that allowed Paul and some of his friends to drive to the hilltop headend twice a week and plug in their VCR for playback from 6:00-8:00 p.m. They did this for seven years, rain or shine. Since there was no funding, the \$65 for production funding had to be secured from a local merchant or individual for each show.

Paul wanted to have a studio. He persuaded the water company to donate a piece of land and many local contractors helped to build the facility. He helped build the building and his "normal" 70 hour week often stretched to 80 hours. With time the organization grew and eventually produced 2,000 shows about local events and people.

After 14 years at the helm, Paul retired from a management position, becoming an executive producer. When he retired, there was a budget of \$76,500. Today he still shoots 8-10 shows per month and conducts workshops. He is proud that Calaveras Community Television, Inc. has provided public access for 15 years without any salaries, mileages or other personal expense refunds. Proof that it can be done!



## CHUCK MYERS

*"....a need to create public awareness..."*

Community Producer Chuck Myers saw a need to create public awareness about marine conservation issues, especially the protection of California's mako shark fishery off the west coast.

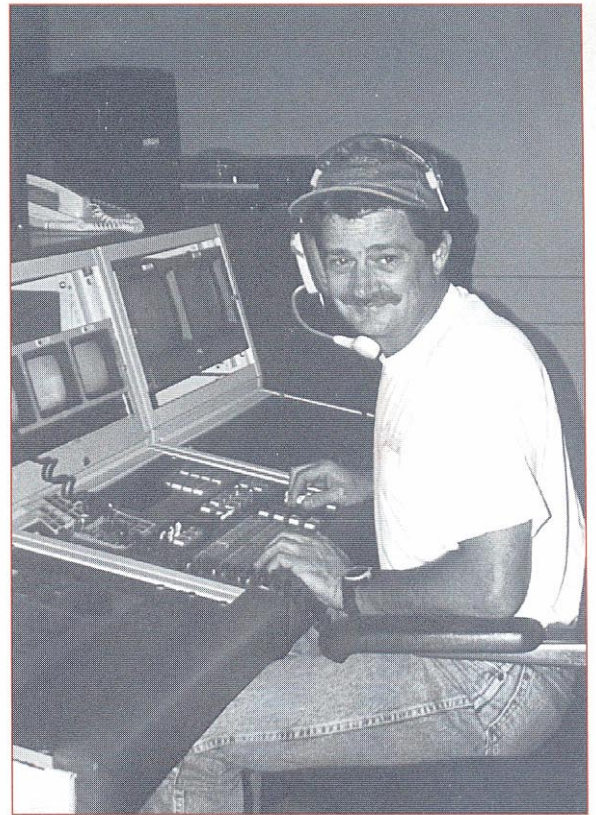
Currently these animals and other marine life are on the verge of extinction due to irresponsible and commercial over-fishing.

*Los Angeles,  
CA*

Realizing that precious resources were being destroyed, Chuck sensed that today's problem would just create many others in the future, affecting everything from sport fishing to the state economy. Chuck joined his mentor, Keith Poe, as a volunteer with the Department of Fish and Game in a tag and release program to track the migration, growth and sex of mako sharks.

In the midst of family, work and his efforts to conserve our ocean resources, Chuck, along with Keith, has produced 21 episodes of *West Coast Sport Fishing Show*. Program topics have included tackle techniques, fishing styles, and conservation awareness. In addition to these efforts Chuck holds a private FAA instrument rated pilot's license. He recently received his Master's Mate Captain's license.

Chuck Myers is an active member of the South Bay Producers' Guild. He supports the coverage and post-production of many local events. He also volunteers his talents in lighting and camerawork in the production of other producers' programs. He is so well respected that he was honored as the 1999 Producer of the Year.



## RUTH CHAMBERS

*"...Fun with a purpose..."*

A brush with breast cancer taught Ruth Chambers a lot about the power of joy, laughter and doing things that make her happy. One thing that makes her happy is entertaining, especially when her audience is children. Her love of both was the major impetus behind the creation of *Granny Muffin Reads*, a program Chambers has produced through Davis Community Television since early 1996.

*Davis, CA*

"Fun with a purpose" is her motto, and she believes that education can be entertaining.

With a background in theater arts, commercial photography and helping at-risk children, Chambers brings a lot to bear on her weekly series. "Granny" reads poems and stories, many self-authored, and introduces children to the lives of historical figures through dramatic readings. In more recent episodes, she's taken her camera on location to cover local sporting events, craft shows, marching band competitions, and the local "Run for the Cure."

In short, if it happens and it's interesting, Granny's usually on the scene. Chambers is well known around Davis and has even been asked for her autograph on occasion. It's getting harder and harder to distinguish Chambers from her alter ego: when she walks through the doors of DCTV, a loud chorus of "Granny!" invariably greets her. She's gained the respect of DCTV staff and fellow volunteer producers alike, not only for her dedication to her program, but for willingness to crew for others, give pep talks to budding producers, or just generally find the silver lining in all things. Of her show, Chambers says, "I have a good time, and I feel that I help people, if only by making them laugh. What could be better?" And, she adds, "if I can do this, anyone can."







## BRENDON CONSTANS

*"...needed an outlet for his energy and talents..."*

Three years ago, a shy 14-year-old boy named Brendon Constans walked into Community Television of Santa Cruz County, after being encouraged by his mother, who had been

home schooling him. Brendon was quiet and introverted, but a bright young kid who needed an outlet for his energy and talents.

Within months, Brendon showed incredible promise. He quickly picked up shooting and editing skills, and soon was mastering the studio production class. Before long, Brendon had made up his mind to start a talk show for people his age.

**Santa Cruz,  
CA**

During this time, Brendon made friends with the Queer TV Crew, a group of producers who have an award winning series on community television. They showed him the ropes, and encouraged his progress. Eventually, Brendon confided in one of the producers (also a CTSCC Board Member) that he was gay.

The strength that Brendon derived from sharing his realization was tremendous. Before long, he was able to tell his parents and close friends that he had come to terms with his sexual identity. He started a live call-in show by and for gay youth, called *Pulp Non-Fiction*, that encouraged both straight and gay teens to get involved in front of and behind the camera. He continued to work with his QTV friends, and assisted QTV Producer Cece Pinheiro in training teens in video production for the show *Queer Youth TV*.

Brendon has produced 100 episodes of *Pulp Non-Fiction*, and is one of the "most wanted" studio directors at the station. A few months ago, Brendon received the 1999 Santa Cruz County Gay Youth Award for his work on *Pulp Non-Fiction* and for training youth in video production through QTV.

## ROBYN & DEREK MAGNUSON

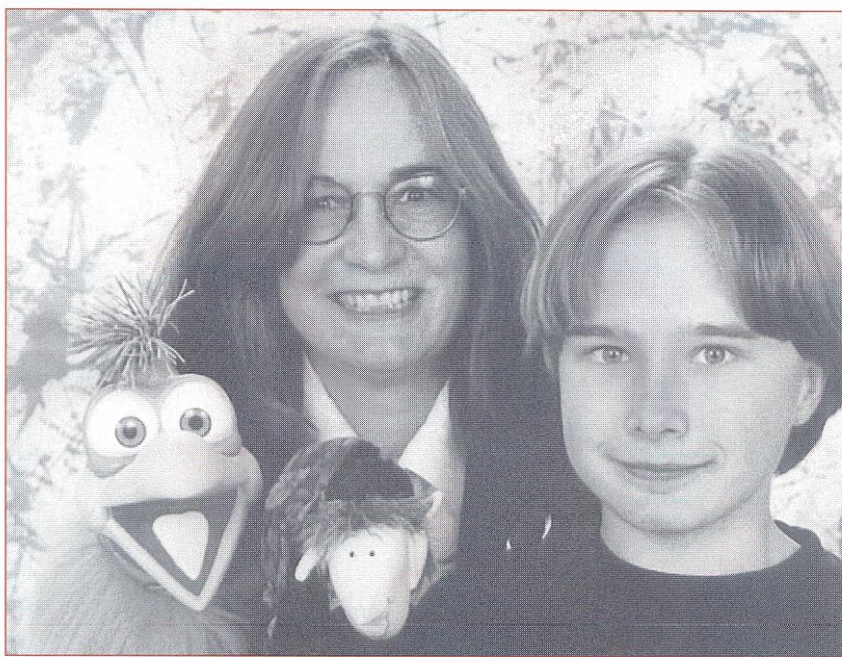
*"...it has changed their lives..."*

Robyn and Derek Magnuson of Santa Rosa, California have discovered a terrific way to nurture their mother/son relationship, and according to Robyn, it has changed their lives. "It brought Derek and me closer together because we write together, perform together, edit together and watch our shows together. We're a team."

**Santa Rosa,  
CA**

In the past two years, Robyn and 13-year-old Derek have become like family at the Community Media Center of Santa Rosa (CMC). They are the creators of *Puppet Tale Theatre*, a regular program on CMC's "Our Channel 72," and they can always be counted on to help with special projects and productions at the media center. Robyn herself has produced, among other things, 11 comedy programs, and Derek was a finalist in the 1998 Western Access Video Excellence Awards for his animated short *Learning with a Lobster*.

Robyn believes that their experiences in community media have not only taught them how to make television, but have



also taught them more about each other. "It makes me proud of Derek and gives me a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment," says Robyn. "From the first day that Derek and I went to orientation, I knew that this is what I wanted to do, for Derek, and for myself."



## MARIETA KILPATRICK

*"...it's like an electronic canvas..."*

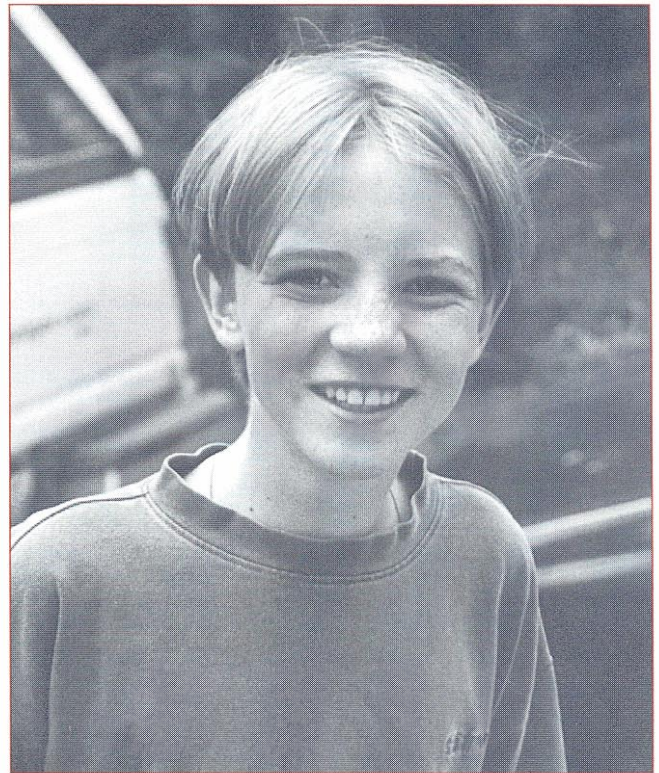
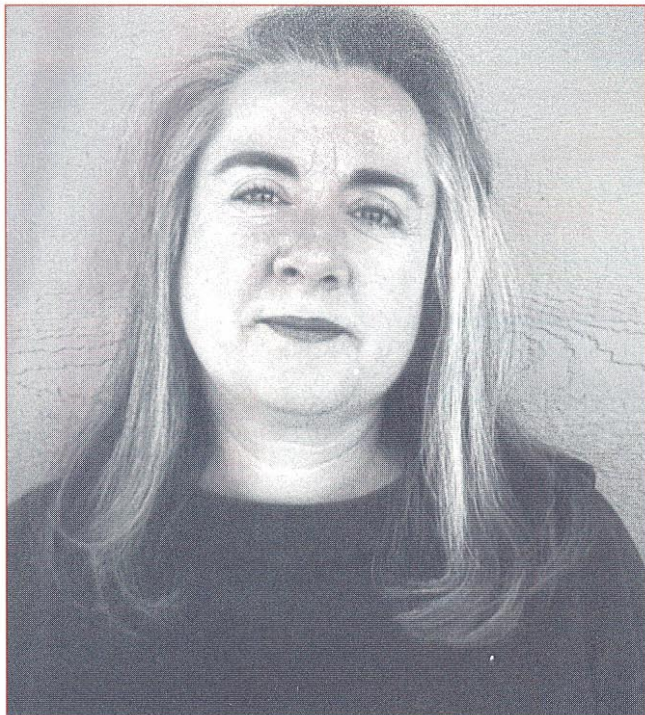
Marieta Kilpatrick became aware of public access shortly before appearing on the community television production, *Boulder Arts*. She had composed the music for a multimedia play to be performed at the Vinelife Church and the video version to be shown on CATV 54.

Before coming to community television, Marieta had no video production experience. With a background in music and the arts, it didn't take long before she saw the possibilities of integrating audio and the visual arts. She went to one of the weekly orientations held at the community television station and took all the video classes offered. She says that working with these different media "is like putting art to motion—it's like an electronic canvas," a new art form well suited for what she already knew.

Her first series at community television was *The Hand of God Among Us*, the story of Moses and the exodus from Egypt. She is now producing two different shows per month. *First Truth With Gayle Coss*, her most recent production, has a talk show format and features local people from the community who exemplify heroic success stories. It focuses on guests who have overcome enormous obstacles in their lives and are now helping other people.

Marieta is producer, director, and editor of all her productions. Her crew ranges in age from 12 to 65 years old. Marieta has produced 19 shows in less than a year and credits the quality of the training classes and the helpfulness of the staff at community television for her involvement. She also volunteers on other programs. She says, "[volunteering] contributes to the communal responsibility of working at an access station."

**Boulder, CO**



## LUKE EBERL

*"...a great outlet for the community..."*

At 13, Luke Eberl is an accomplished actor and award-winning producer. Luke was making short videos with his friends when he had an idea to do a documentary. His foray into the documentary genre was *Banned Book*, featuring interviews on the topic of banned books. He subsequently entered *Banned Books* in the first annual Boulder Community Media Awards, winning awards for Best Youth Video and Best Video in the First Amendment category.

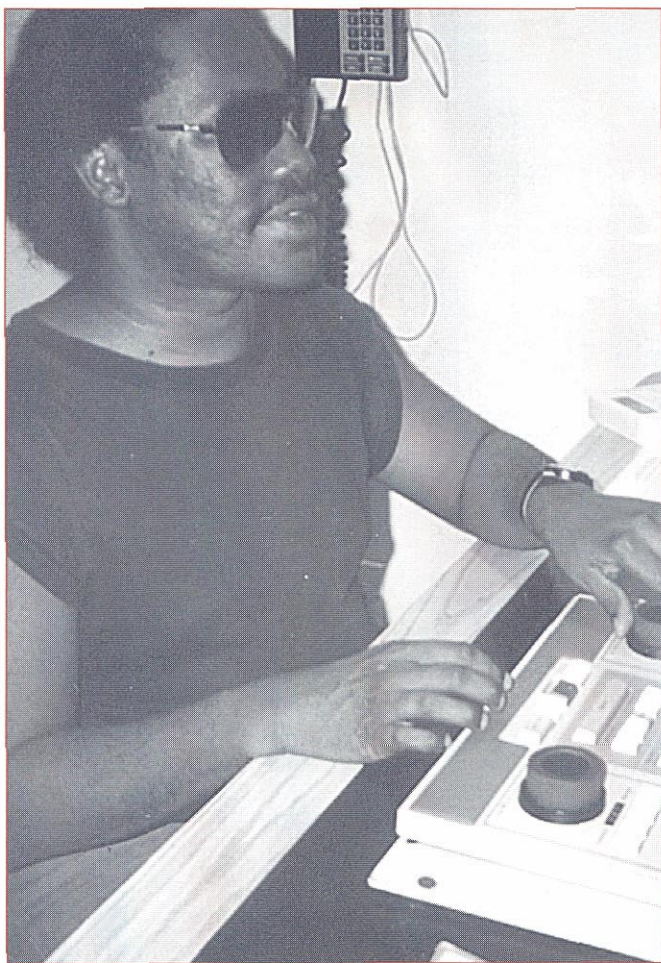
**Boulder, CO**

The following year, Luke entered *In the Mood*, a show about "Cool Kids with Cool Stories" in the second annual Boulder Community Media Awards, again winning awards for Best Youth Video and for the Best Video Reflecting Diversity. Luke was ecstatic when *In the Mood* was chosen Best Youth Video at the 1999 Hometown Video Festival.

Luke is home-schooled because his career goals and activities are incompatible with a regular school curriculum. Community television has become part of his schooling. "I would never be able to learn everything I've learned about video production by going to school," he emphatically states.

A dependable and readily available volunteer, Luke has worked on numerous productions as floor director, director, audio and camera person. "Working on a production is so much fun, it's a collaboration—everyone coming together for the purpose of completing a project." Luke has promoted community television before the Boulder City Council and to the media. "It's a great outlet for the community, to be able to say and show whatever you want without the fear of being censored. To have a resource like this is incredible."





## JOHNIE JOHNSON

*"...forget what you can't do, and go ahead and do what you enjoy..."*

Johnie Johnson has overcome his visual impairment to run the equipment in the control room and edit suites. He often asks for help to find a volunteer who can be "his eyes" while he edits. He has hosted, produced and edited two series at Denver Community Television with over 60 programs to his credit.

**Denver, CO**

Johnie's programs give voice to the disabled community. "I have been producing *Innervision* since 1989," says Johnson of one series. "By having guests who have either visual impairments or other disabilities, my goal has been to give the audience an insight into what it is like to be blind, legally blind, or in a wheelchair."

Johnie's programs have shown that if you do have a disability, there are opportunities for you to meet people with similar problems. His philosophy is to just forget what you can't do and go ahead and do what you enjoy. "We have come to a new age when we disabled people can do just about anything we want," he says.

In addition to *Innervision*, Johnie produced and hosted *Power and Victory*, a series showcasing Christian musicians, with discussions on issues facing the community. He also has written and produced a made-for-access movie called *Even Me*.

Prior to his work in access television, Johnie worked for KCFR radio producing interview segments. After hearing about community access television, he recruited a friend to be his camera person and began creating programs.

## KIM SHANNON

*"...provides kids with a platform to express themselves..."*

Producer Kim Shannon set out to create children's programming that would break the mold. She placed an advertisement in a local Boulder newspaper inviting kids to attend an organizational meeting for a new kind of kids show. Thirty kids from 9-14 years in age showed up. *Kidversations* was born.

On *Kidversations*, kids combine skills in television production with their own ideas of what television programming should be. The goal—to produce programming that provides kids with a platform to express themselves and where they have control over production and content.

**Boulder, CO**

The first *Kidversations* program was shot over a three month period, and post-production was a long and arduous task. It was telecast a year after that initial meeting. Soon the word was out—*Kidversations* was a new and innovative concept in children's programming. Kim is quick to point out that a project like this would not have been possible without the wherewithal of co-founder and business director Leslie Nelson and technical wiz Shane Williams.

*Kidversations* is on a roll. In 1999, they held three camps and this fall there will be five after-school sessions. Diversity is an important goal. *Kidversations* does outreach to various communities and scholarships are offered through the city of Boulder to youth participants. Kim says that, "*Kidversations* was born in Boulder, but I would like to see kids in other communities have the opportunity to share their feelings, ideas, opinions, basically, share who they are. Public access is a powerful medium to speak and be heard."





## NEAL SNARR

*"...the chance to develop new skills through my involvement with community access media..."*

**H**is name is Neal Snarr. He lives in Wailuku, seat of government for the County of Maui. He's a producer and part-time staff member at Akaku: Maui

**Wailuku, HI**

Community Television, which is located in Kahului, island of Maui, Hawai'i.

A native of California, Neal spent his early years racing motorcycles. By age 21 he was racing professionally, until a bad accident left him in a wheelchair. However, he was not slowed down; he moved on to winning a medal for snow skiing and to coaching young motorcycle racers, not to mention his participation in two marathons in the wheelchair division! As a training tool, Neal began videotaping his students and discovered a new passion—the camcorder!

Since getting started with producer training at Akaku, he has worked with various non-profit groups; produced, directed, filmed, and edited numerous shows; and crewed for multi-camera studio and field events, including Maui sports events. Neal has also been a key member of the team for Maui County Council meeting coverage. His work has been shown on KGMB/Channel 9, the CBS affiliate in Honolulu, on their news sports program.

Neal was hired as a production/facility assistant at Akaku in April of 1999. His involvement with community media is readily recognized on the island of Maui, and his professional services are in high demand. At the ribbon cutting ceremony for a new building housing Maui's largest non-profit agency, Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO), Neal was chosen to be the island representative of the disabled clients utilizing MEO's services.

In his work as well as his home life, Neal's actions and words reflect his dedicated spirit to the community in which he lives. In his own words, "I was given the chance to develop new skills through my involvement with community access media. Now I have the opportunity to give back to Maui what has been so freely given to me—a way of life that knows no obstacles."



ADAPT members Gloria Nichols (left) and Monica Heffner (right) with CAN TV program coordinator Kerry Richardson in CAN TV's studio control room.

## AMERICAN DISABLED FOR ATTENDANT PROGRAMS TODAY (ADAPT)

*"...You never see these issues discussed in mainstream media..."*

**T**he members of the disability rights group ADAPT are used to fighting for their goals. ADAPT, or American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today, has a clear agenda that stresses self-reliance and self-determination for people with disabilities. Among other issues, the group campaigns for improved public transportation, and personal attendant care rather than what they see as the dehumanization of nursing homes. "You never see these issues discussed in mainstream media," says ADAPT member Tom Wilson. "We need an avenue to talk to the public, and a way to organize other people with disabilities, many of whom are isolated from society."

**Chicago, IL**

When they began working with Chicago Access Network Television (CAN TV), ADAPT members found an outlet to achieve this double mission. Their live hotline show was an opportunity to reach out directly to viewers and personally answer their questions. Then ADAPT members took on a more ambitious project—a regular studio production. CAN TV staff trained ADAPT members in camera operation, lighting, sound recording and control room operation. "Who thought you'd see people in wheelchairs sitting behind cameras," member Gloria Nichols says. "But we did it. We did the whole thing."

ADAPT's program includes field footage of rallies and other events along with the studio segments. They showcase leaders in the disability community, from political activists to actors, musicians and dancers. "We plan to create more messages of disability pride and demand greater social justice for people with disabilities," Tom Wilson says.



## DEREK GRACE

*"...It's given me the chance to do the things I love doing, plus they benefit a lot of people..."*

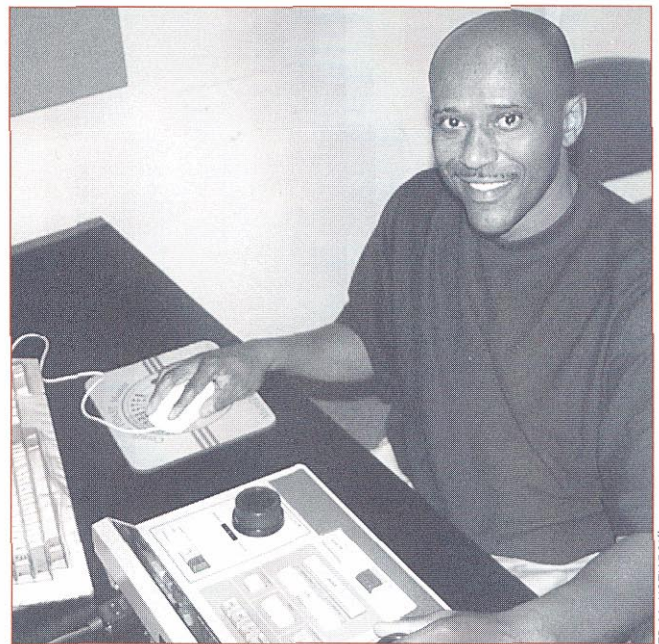
Editing a tape at CAN TV one afternoon, a producer hit a wall. He was trying to edit a segment onto his master tape, but the source deck wouldn't feed into the master deck. He was stuck. Luckily, Derek Grace was in the next suite over.

*Chicago, IL*

Patiently, Grace walked the producer through the process and showed him how to correct the problem. Other CAN TV producers know they can turn to Grace for technical advice when they need it. He's happy to help because he's been there. In 1991 a friend with a Cajun cooking show introduced Grace to Chicago Access Network Television. With no video experience, Grace enrolled in training so he could produce PSAs to recruit volunteer tutors. "What I liked most was getting hands-on experience with the equipment," Grace says. "That's what really pushed me along."

Grace started documenting exhibits for the DuSable Museum of African American History. Soon his video work was in demand by other nonprofits. He had recently left his job at IBM to start the "My Kind of Cookie" company. "I realized the cookie business wasn't the business I should be in," Grace says. "I should be in the video business."

He founded Grace Productions, which serves a mainly non-



ED M. KOZIARSKI

profit clientele. A CAN TV spot he recently produced for the South Side Help Center brought their HIV prevention program several volunteers. "CAN TV has really changed my life a lot," Grace says. "It's given me the chance to do the things I love doing, plus they benefit a lot of people."

— Ed M. Koziarski



## LISA BRIGHTMAN

*"...Remember, you too can Inspire America..."*

Lisa Brightman wants to inspire people. Her program, *Inspire America*, features guests that are "most inspirational, always informative, and frequently enlightening."

As the host of *Inspire America*, Lisa has interviewed the famous (singer/composer, Stevie Wonder) and the courageous (blind marathon runner, Joe Quintanilla). It is Lisa, however, that provides the greatest inspiration. Lisa Binsfield is blind.

*Cambridge, MA*

At age 13, Lisa lost her sight when a benign brain tumor was removed. She challenged societal expectations for the blind and earned a degree in communications from Oakland University, followed by a masters degree concentrating in government from Harvard.

Access television allowed her to pursue her dream of hosting a television program when she became a producer at Cambridge Community Television in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Lisa uses television as a positive communications medium. "I want people to be inspired and motivated to be and do the best they can," she says. Her mission is to take *Inspire America* into national syndication. The show is currently seen on access channels in Massachusetts and New York.

Lisa B., as she is known to her friends and fans, has overcome diversity to become an inspirational role model for her viewers. *Inspire America* [www.inspireamericashow.com] has established itself as a forum for individuals to detail their inspirational, motivational or educational stories.

Lisa believes that inspiration can be found everywhere and demonstrates her optimistic philosophy in the simple phrase at the end of each of her programs. "Remember, you too can *Inspire America*."



## ROLAND NELSON

*"...he rallied the support of the community, and challenged the county council to reinstate and increase funding..."*

Roland Nelson has volunteered as a public access producer for Community Television of Prince George's since May 1991.

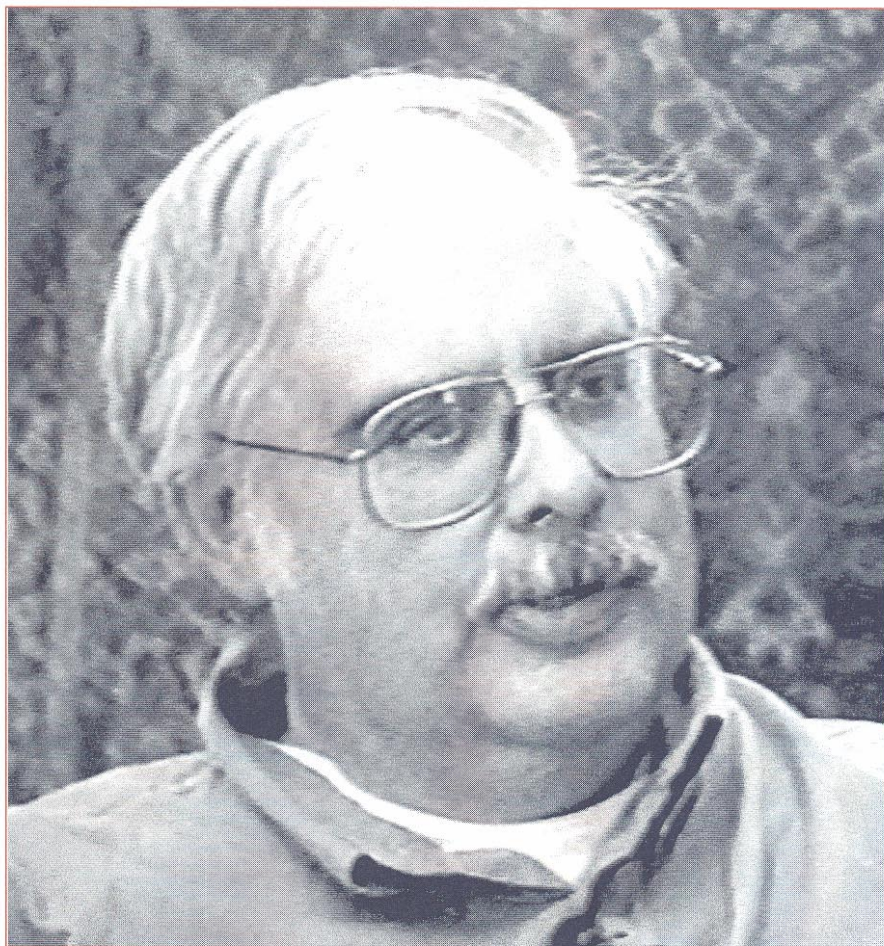
Dedicated to serving Prince George's County, Roland has not let a physical handicap impair him from

*Largo, MD*

being an advocate for CTV. With the threat of a recently proposed budget cut, he rallied the support of the community, and challenged the county council to reinstate and increase funding. The funds were subsequently restored! Roland Nelson gets the credit for getting funding continued.

In addition to this significant event, Roland continues to assist with the production of CTV's live daily newscast. He is a field producer for the New Liberation Church, and at the request of CTV, covered the scholarship breakfast for the J. Franklin Bourne Bar Association. He also covers other events for CTV, including the recent dedication of the Redskins Stadium in Prince George's County.

CTV Executive Director Sherry Byrne says, "We value and salute Roland Nelson. Without individuals like him, public access would have a hard time surviving."



## JAMES T. SCHAEFER

*"...he got upset, then he took action..."*

James T. Schaefer is senior editor for the international quarterly of the social sciences, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, at the University of Michigan. He is also the executive producer and host for *Riprap: The Academic Book Television Program*.

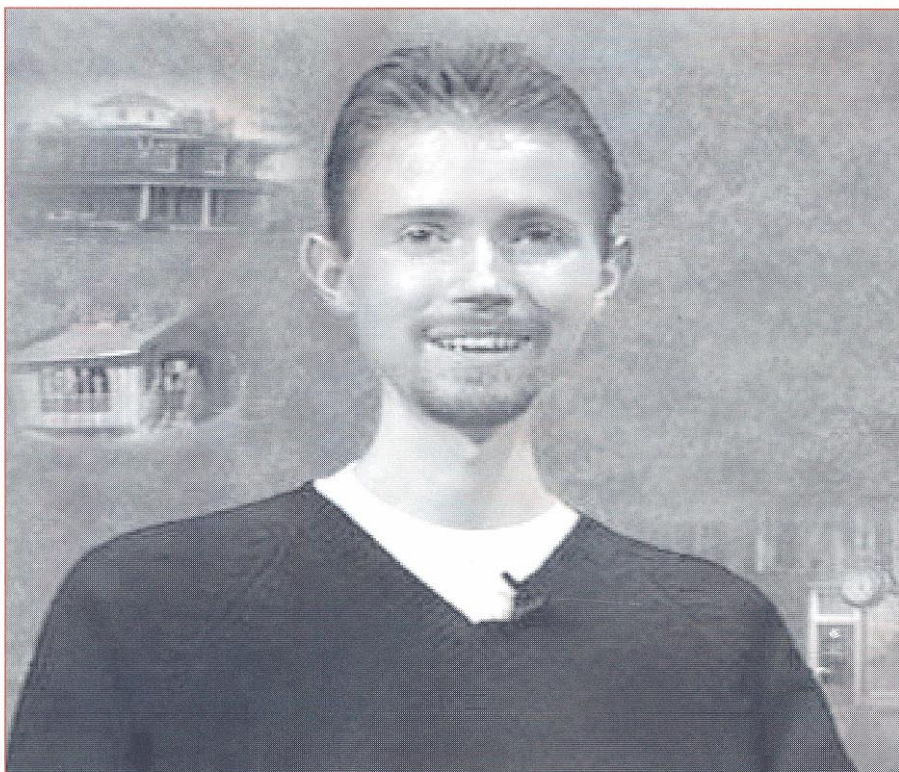
*Ann Arbor, MI*

When Jim Schaefer read in the *New York Times* that university presses were cutting back on publishing purely academic books, he got upset. Then he took action. He recalled reading about CTN's production training program. "Fortunately," says Schaefer, "for those interested in academic books, another group—those interested in community access to television—shares the goal of preserving access to the flows of global communication and the belief that much could and should be done to disseminate ideas and preserve free speech by sharing resources. A partnership benefits both."

That partnership was realized when Schaefer, through the CTN facilities, began producing *Riprap*, the first television program in the United States to focus only on academic books. Some 20 programs later his guests have included former U.S. poet laureate Robert Hass, the head of the Mellon Foundation William Bowen, and American University in Beirut Professor Andrzej Kulczycki.

Jim has expanded the series from CTN's local viewing audience to the even wider arena of public television. He convinced WFUM-TV, the University of Michigan's public television station broadcasting out of Flint, to carry the program. All total *Riprap* has 1.4 million potential viewers!





## BRIAN SWICA

*"...He wanted to be one of the first disabled people to be shown in his wheelchair on the air..."*

Brian Swica died August 9, 1999 of complications from the muscular dystrophy. His sense of humor and indomitable spirit overcame obstacles posed by his condition to become news director at WBRW-Channel 6, the public access television station serving Romeo, Michigan. He was 25.

**Romeo, MI**

"He got an internship at Channel 6 in 1994, and he just fell in love with being in front of the camera," said his mother, Gayle Devins. "He wanted to be one of the first disabled people to be shown in his wheelchair on the air. He just wanted to break a lot of barriers, because there were a lot of barriers for him growing up."

Swica received a bachelor's degree in communications from Wayne State University in 1996. It was while attending WSU that he interned at WBRW. Since 1997, Mr. Swica worked as news director. He produced, edited and appeared as the news anchor. "The only thing he didn't do was the camera work," Ms. Devins said. "Those who worked for him say he demanded the best from everyone on the show, including himself, never letting his disabilities lower his high standards for the show, but always with a sense of humor."

In 1998, he won a Philo T. Farnsworth Award for his documentary *The Top Dawgs*, about a top Romeo high school basketball team of the 1960s. He had also hosted *The End of Regulation*, a sports interview and highlight program that was considered the Romeo equivalent of ESPN's Sportscenter.

In the days before his death, Swica completed taping for a documentary he called *Muscular Dystrophy Summer Camp: What Your Mother Doesn't Know*. His mother said he turned the project over to her. She was finishing it up in the editing suite at the station.

"He came home from camp so tired that Friday before he died. He logged everything into the computer for me," she said. "What have I learned? Basically I learned what it takes to produce a video. He was my greatest teacher. He always felt that life was too short to waste feeling sorry for yourself. You just wanted to do your best when you were around him."

## JOHN RUSTERHOLZ

*"...six cameras, two mobile vans, a cherry picker, a golf cart, 40 volunteers and 10 CTV staffers..."*

When the city of Roseville organized its first community parade in 1990, John Rusterholz taped it for replay on CTV. The rookie volunteer had taken

**Roseville, MN**

classes three months earlier and was itching to direct a production. The shoot used three cameras, one mobile van and nine volunteers.

John has produced our coverage of every Rose Parade since. This year, it went live on the channel, used six cameras, two mobile vans, a cherry picker, a golf cart, 40 volunteers and 10 CTV staffers. It included a half-hour pre-parade show, packages of taped interviews throughout, and the post-parade band awards.

John produces parade coverage for three of our cities each year and has trained other volunteers to produce coverage for three others, though not all choose such an elaborate production. The parade coverage gives CTV 15 a great deal of visibility in the community.

John is always willing to work with inexperienced volunteers who are motivated. His willingness to mentor others has helped develop a roster of over 200 skilled volunteers. We've tapped John to teach a yearly class on producing and directing for access television.

John wrote the book on CTV15 parade coverage. He generously gives his time and talent, and in the process, has created programming that has had a significant impact on our community and inspired our staff and other community producers.



## LINDA GARRISH

*".. they gave a strong voice to the community..."*

Linda Garrish is a community organizer who has utilized public access to empower the disenfranchised in Manchester, New Hampshire. Linda began as a community organizer in 1990. A single mother of a teenage son, Jonathan, Linda first became involved in access in 1995. She began producing programs about the closing of one of the two remaining hospitals in Manchester.

**Manchester, NH**

While the commercial media ignored the story of the impact on the city, Linda enhanced her local organizing activities by using access. She produced interview programs, live call-in shows, neighborhood documentaries, and community forums featuring healthcare professionals and citizens examining the hospital closing. These programs helped focus attention on the questionable practices of the hospital's administration and board of directors. They gave a strong voice to the community, which said keep the hospital open. After the New Hampshire Attorney General investigated the situation, the board was dissolved and the hospital remains open today.

Linda continued community organizing by producing programs on living homeless, community economic development, healthcare reform, community policing, green space, diversity, discrimination and multicultural issues as well as multigenerational issues. In 1998 Linda, as a Democrat, was elected to the New Hampshire House of Representatives from a predominately Republican ward.

Linda has interviewed Senator Bob Kerrey, Senator Paul Wellstone, Congressman Gephart, Senator Evan Bayh, and Vice-President Gore. Through her access productions, she defines participatory democracy at the local and state level. With her work in the New Hampshire Presidential primary, she will impact the national agenda.



LOUIS H. FOISY PHOTOGRAPHY

## BILL DOLAN

*"...everything from cameraman to tape operator..."*

It's amazing! Bill Dolan stands out among Norwood Community Television's volunteer corps as much for who he is as how he participates in public, education, and government access productions.

Bill is a retired lifetime resident of the city, who has been an entrepreneur, an auxiliary police officer, participant in his local parish, and most importantly to the station, a Norwood Community Television volunteer.

**Norwood, OH**

Bill is the unofficial historian of NCT's local community events program, *Around Town*. On *Around Town*, viewers learn about upcoming meetings and events, get a little entertainment from a mini-movie, and every so often get a little bit of history supplied by the official research department, Amazing Bill

Dolan. Bill let us know that a former Miss USA (circa 1920s) was a former Miss Norwood, and that Doris Day was once the grand marshal of the Norwood Day Parade. While providing this information, he also is everything from cameraman to tape operator.

He'll tell you that at 70-plus and suffering from heart disease, he's slowing down a bit. Try telling that to the veterans he assists as a volunteer at the Cincinnati VA hospital, or to those at NCT, where each week he helps with *Around Town*, plus yearly events like the Norwood Day Parade, Norwood Day Baby Contest and Norwood Day at Coney Island.

Slowing down? I don't think so. Amazing? You Bet!

– Tom Bishop





## ALDONA RYAN

*"...She is a producer everyone loves..."*

In the early '90s, Aldona and Joe Ryan retired at the same time and were looking for something to do together as a couple. In 1992, they took the video production classes at Miami Valley Cable Council and began volunteering on every studio show they could.

**Kettering, OH**

Their interest in producing peaked after a representative from the Dayton Historical Society made a presentation at the local senior citizen center. Aldona asked her if she would like to tell her story on television. She agreed, and this became their first leap into producing programs.

Aldona explained why they made such a great production team. "Joe had the technical skills, and I had the background in theater and writing," she said. Since that first show they went on to produce several different types of productions. Their regular series titles *Mnemonic Interval* just celebrated the taping of its 100th episode. Aldona produces a "Senior Corner" segment for MVCC's monthly *Community Action News*. Her strong ties in the community have also led her to produce musical programs that featured performances by the Kettering Banjo Society, Lithuanian Dancers, and Hithergreen Singers.

Although Joe died in 1996, Aldona has continued to serve as the unofficial "access ambassador" for MVCC. She has been invited to speak to many community groups about her love of local history.

Aldona is proud of the volunteering she does. She has taught the staff and other volunteers how to work together as a team to achieve common goals. Everyone who meets her is impressed with her leadership style and her ability to make television production a fun and enjoyable experience. She is a producer everyone loves.

## TIM ROONEY

*"...These are stories that need to be told..."*

Tim's program, *Songs of Sojourn: Japanese Americans in Oregon*, is a series of oral histories sponsored by the Oregon Nikkei (Japanese American) Legacy Center. The center currently hosts art exhibits and seminars and houses a library of books and videos on Japanese American history, including Tim's videos.

**Portland, OR**

When the oral history project started, members of the community were taping oral histories on audiocassettes. Then the idea was proposed to have someone take classes at Portland Cable Access and use the equipment to get these oral histories on video. Tim had always been interested in PCA, and eagerly took on the challenge.

Members of the community choose subjects for interviews. Then Tim videotapes the interviews, and edits in photographs, documentary film footage, maps, and anything else to help

illustrate the subject's life story. When they receive a cablecast schedule from PCA, the dates and times of showings are printed in the Portland Japanese American Citizens League newsletter, so that any interested members of the community can tune into or tape the interviews. Copies are archived at the Legacy Center for checkout.

The people chosen for interviews hold a unique place in American history. They have been focusing on people who were interned during World War II, veterans who fought for their county while their families were in internment camps, and civil rights workers who fought to overturn discriminatory laws. These are stories that need to be told. In addition, Tim has been videotaping lectures, cultural events, and educational presentations for the Legacy Center.

In recognition of his efforts, the Portland Cable Access Board awarded the first Award of Excellence for Outstanding Programming to volunteer producer Tim Rooney.



## GRETCHEN HOLLINGSWORTH

*"...a video archive of African Americans for the public and community access viewers..."*

Gretchen Hollingsworth is one of the Houston MediaSource veterans, both as an individual producer and a free-lance staff videographer.

Originally Gretchen came to Houston MediaSource as a mental health advocate to relate her

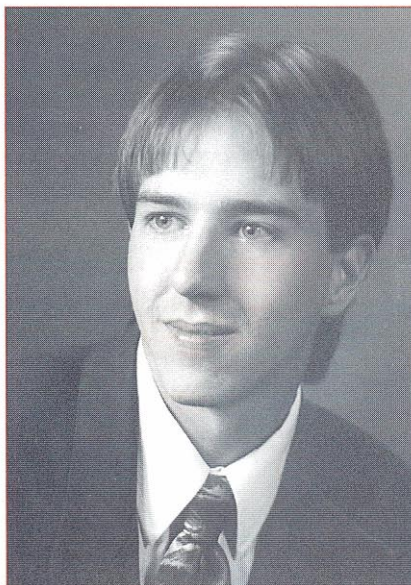
own heart-breaking and inspiring story to public access viewers. Hollingsworth's programs became more diverse to include consumer health and performing and visual arts for the African American community of Houston.

Gretchen's interview with composer and performing artist Rachelle Ferrell inspired Gretchen to seek out information on other notable African American performers.

Hollingsworth's search efforts revealed a void of print and video information on African American artists. This void spurred on her next project, to create a video archive of African Americans for the public and community access viewers. Gretchen's resulting programs are "unique video interviews with music legends that chronicle personal insights, struggles and accomplishments in the ever changing field of performing arts. These entertainers are an integral part of a very rich African American cultural heritage."

"As a videographer, I am dedicated to preserving the artistic merits of African Americans," she says. "I want this tapestry of video collages to serve as a venue for community awareness and develop, through education, an understanding of topics related to self-motivation, mental and spiritual well being and endurance. When we learn to appreciate the effort, struggle and achievements of others, we are propelled to a higher level of sensitivity and appreciation and see a reflection of ourselves."

*Houston, TX*



## JAMES T. & LOIS ANDERSON

*"...You'll get the bug..."*

James T. Anderson started at YCAT at the age of 14 when his mother came to the studio to do her first show on breast cancer. Jim, as he likes to be called, was only 12 when his mother was diagnosed, so he was pretty excited as she prepared for the show. When Jason Smith, then president of YCAT, asked if he would like to help videotape his mother's TV show, he was delighted.

At the time, he was happy to help his mother with the production, but as Jason told him, "You'll get the bug!" The "bug" he was referring to was the excitement and activity surrounding the production of a broadcast. Jim joined YCAT.

*York, PA*

By age 17, he decided on a television broadcasting career. Before graduation, he applied for a job at WPMT, the Fox Network station, in York, PA. After three months of waiting, he was hired. He started with the prompter and studio camera for the nightly news and quickly learned many new skills. Now at age 19 he is entering his sophomore year in college for Mass Communications and is a technical director at WPMT. To think it all began with a scared, excited 14-year-old kid simply wanting to sit back and watch his mother's videotape production on breast cancer.

Lois A. Anderson was given a poor prognosis after she was diagnosed with a serious form of breast cancer in 1992. Because she did not want other women to have to go through her experience, she became involved with spreading information about breast cancer using the media. In 1994 she was approached by Toni Smith, host of a YCAT program known as *Toni's Place*, and asked if she would do a show about breast cancer topics. After two programs were produced, Lois attained a sense of celebrity and was sought by various community groups for educational information on breast cancer.

Because of YCAT, Lois has been able to get the message out concerning early detection, and perhaps more importantly, that women of any age need to be aware of the threat of breast cancer. Because of TV exposure gained by her YCAT experiences, she has gained credibility as a breast cancer advocate and expert in the area of breast cancer. She is now considered one of the top resource people in our area on the subject of breast cancer.

Lois has appeared on several other TV stations in our area such as WSPC, WHTM, WGAL, and WPMT discussing breast cancer topics. She has won numerous awards for community service, such as The Jefferson Award, The Golden Rule Award, The Golden Eagle Award, and in 1999 The Outstanding Woman of the Year in Pennsylvania.



## CAROL BURNS

*"...after five years of community organizing, city council meetings, and many drafts of operating policies..."*

Carol Burns has worn many hats with Thurston Community TV. It is her most recent role as volunteer community producer that has brought her full circle back to her true love, video production.

In 1966, Carol enrolled as a graduate student in the radio-television-film program at Stanford University. The television instructor advised: "You girls might as well forget it. There are no women directors and there never will be because men can't take orders from women." Carol gravitated toward documentary film, taught that year only, by visiting instructor George Stoney. She went on to make some educational and documentary films for clients.

In 1980, feeling stalled in her career, she visited George Stoney in New York. Stoney had been traveling around the country collecting samples of local programming to demonstrate how local programs benefited their communities. After seeing one of these presentations, Carol decided to return to her home town of Olympia, Washington and start public access there. In 1986, after five years of community organizing, city council meetings, and many drafts of operating policies, the non-profit group she helped create received the contract to operate PEG access in the Olympia area.

Carol was employed by Thurston Community TV for eight years. In 1994 she "retired" so that at last she could follow her original dream of producing television. "I never had an opportunity to just practice, the way an artist sketches," she says. "Now, at age 60, I'm amazed at how far my camera and editing skills have advanced."

As a TCTV volunteer, Carol is most likely to respond to requests from community groups concerned with social and political issues. Usually she works outside the studio covering presentations or rallies or doing news or documentary style pieces. She also likes challenging camera assignments for parades and performances, and occasionally some video art.

Her programming efforts have brought her both regional and national awards. At the 1998 Best of the Northwest video festival Carol received two awards, one for documentary and the other for video art. In 1999, she received a Hometown Judges Choice Award for video art.

Carol's dedication and determination have been priceless resources for Thurston Community TV. Her contributions, support, and passion for community media are a legacy upon which TCTV can build for the future.

*Olympia, WA*



## FREDERIC EIGUER

*"...I realized I could do something..."*

My dream is to launch a television channel that will broadcast the message of human rights all over the world." That said, Frédéric Eiguer resumes working on *Human Rights Multimedia/Droits de l'Homme Multimedia*, a project on which he has spent all of his money and the better part of two years.

Based in a one-room flat in south Paris, Frédéric is tireless and dedicated, but seems no closer to realizing his dream. However he has built a fairly dense web-site consisting of news reports, photos, A/V files, and an extensive bibliography. Every week Eiguer updates the site with news from around the world, as he receives dozens of regular press releases and eyewitness reports.

"The war in Bosnia sparked my interest in exposing human rights abuses but I felt powerless to do anything. By turning back and studying my heroes in the struggle, I realized that I could do something."

*Paris, France*

Patching together some computers, he started the website. He began producing audio reportages and then turned to Ondes Sans Frontières (Broadcasts without Borders), a pirate TV station in east Paris, to help produce several television programs. Single-handedly, Eiguer wrote and hosted all the programs but the production quality suffered.

"It was difficult and disheartening because we have nothing like public access here in France. But I now understand that without some kind of training I cannot develop this project." Though 20 years his senior, Frédéric Eiguer inspires me too. Like many people his age, he found refuge in the virtual worlds of multimedia technology. Unlike others, Frederic discovered a positive means of self-expression and through it, a way to re-engage the real world and maybe change it for the better.

"I know that Human Rights Multimedia cannot become a reality with only me, but miracles can happen with a team of people who share the same ideas and ideals." You can contact Frédéric Eiguer at [contact@hrmdhm.com](mailto:contact@hrmdhm.com). The website is at [www.hrmdhm.com](http://www.hrmdhm.com).

– Jeffrey Hansell



## An Invitation to Join the *Alliance for Communications Democracy*

...increasing awareness of Community Television through educational programs and participation in court cases involving franchise enforcement and constitutional questions about access television.

**Become an Alliance Subscriber for \$350/year** and receive detailed reports on current court cases threatening access, pertinent historical case citations, and other Alliance activities.

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  - Alliance Associate, \$2500 - copies of all briefs and reports.
  - Alliance Supporter, \$500 - copies of all reports and enclosures.
  - Alliance Subscriber, \$350 - copies of all reports.

Direct membership inquiries to Rob Brading, Multnomah Community Television, 26000 SE Stark St., Gresham, OR 97038, telephone 503/667-7636, or email at [rbrading@mctv.org](mailto:rbrading@mctv.org)

For the past 10 years, the Alliance for Communications Democracy has been fighting to preserve and strengthen access. Though the odds against us have been high, and the mega-media, corporate foes well-heeled and powerful, time and again we've won in the courts. We can't continue this critical work without your support. With the ramifications of the 1996 Telecommunications Act only now beginning to manifest themselves, we must be vigilant if we are to prevail and preserve democratic communications. If not us, who? If not now, when? Please join the Alliance for Communications Democracy today!

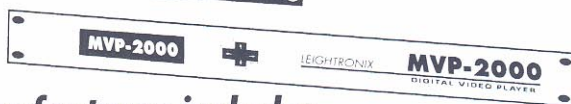
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